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ABSTRACT

An exploration of the history and status of the English language around the world focuses on how beliefs and attitudes have shaped and continue to shape the role of the language. An introductory section examines how perceptions of standard English have paralleled a tendency toward increased linguistic intolerance in the twentieth century. Subsequent chapters address historic aspects and linguistic varieties of English: early stages in the rising prestige of English worldwide (16th century); awareness of the value of language and increasing creative use of English (17th century); export of English; assertion of the language's superiority abroad; linguistic change and borrowing in the context of other cultures; the language's role in the post-colonial world; efforts to improve English to enhance its image; idealization of the language; fears about decline; and a summary of attitudes and attitude changes concerning English over the centuries. Contains 482 references. (MSE)

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